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Food and Drug Administration (FDA) commissioner Marty Makary speaks during a news conference on the FDA's intent to phase out the use of petroleum-based synthetic dyes in the nation's food supply at the Hubert Humphrey Building Auditorium in Washington, Tuesday, April 22, 2025.

Associated Press

FDA to rehire fired staffers who booked inspection trips, but other workers remain in limbo

By **MATTHEW PERRONE**
AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — For the second time in recent months, the Food and Drug Administration is bringing back some recently fired employees, including staffers who handle travel bookings for safety inspectors.

More than 20 of the agency's roughly 60 travel staff will be reinstated, according to two FDA staffers notified of the plan this week, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss confidential agency matters.

Food scientists who test samples for bacteria and study potentially harmful chemicals also have been told they will get their jobs back, but have yet to receive any official confirmation.

The same uncertainty hangs over employees who process agency records for release to lawyers, companies and journalists under the Freedom of Information Act. About 100 of those staffers were recently eliminated, according to an agency official with direct knowledge of the situation. But in recent days the FDA has missed multiple court-ordered deadlines to produce documents, which could result in hefty fines. That's prompted plans to bring back a significant

number of those staffers.

The apparent reversals are the latest examples of the haphazard approach to agency cuts that have shrunk FDA's workforce by an estimated 20%, or about 3,500 jobs, in addition to an unspecified number of retirements, voluntary buy-outs and resignations.

In February, the FDA laid off about 700 provisional employees, including food and medical device reviewers, only to rehire many of them within days after pushback from industry, Congress and other parties.

The Department of Health and Human Services hasn't detailed exactly which positions or programs were cut in the mass layoffs.

FDA Commissioner Marty Makary has repeatedly said that no FDA scientists were fired as part of the reductions. But at least two dozen food scientists who worked in a San Francisco testing laboratory and a Chicago research center were let go in March.

An HHS spokesperson suggested the apparent mix-up was due to "the fractured, outdated HR infrastructure we inherited from the Biden administration and are now actively overhauling." The spokesperson did not respond to specific questions about which

employees are being reinstated but said the administration will "streamline operations and fix the broken systems left to us."

About 15 scientists working in FDA's Division of Food Processing Science and Technology in Chicago were told last week they will be reinstated, according to a staffer who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss confidential agency matters. But a week later there has been no written confirmation and the scientists have not returned to the office. The group's research includes studying ways to prevent harmful bacteria from growing on produce and preventing the spread of microplastics and other particles from food packaging.

"I hope Commissioner Makary continues to assess these ill-informed cuts and works to bring back impacted employees expeditiously," said Susan Mayne of Yale University, the FDA's former food director. "His legacy as commissioner is on the line."

With more than 15,000 employees remaining across various U.S. and foreign offices, the FDA's core responsibilities are reviewing new drugs, medical products and food ingredients as well as inspecting thousands of factories. □



A doctor performs an ultrasound scan on a pregnant woman at a hospital in Chicago, Aug. 7, 2018.

Associated Press

U.S. maternal death rate rose slightly last year, health officials say

By **MIKE STOBBE**
AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — More U.S. women died around the time of childbirth last year, reversing two years of decline, according to provisional data posted Wednesday.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said 688 people died last year during pregnancy or shortly after giving birth. That's up from 669 deaths in 2023, but down from 2022 and 2021, when it was the highest level in more than 50 years.

The maternal mortality rate rose to 19 deaths per 100,000 live births, up from 18.6 the year before.

The CDC counts women who die while pregnant, during childbirth and up to 42 days after birth from conditions related to pregnancy. Excessive bleeding, blood vessel blockages and infections are leading causes.

Such deaths spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic, as the coronavirus was particularly dangerous to pregnant women. And, in the worst days of the pandemic, burned out physicians may have added to the risk by ignoring pregnant women's worries, experts say.

The waning of COVID-19 is considered a major reason for the declines in maternal deaths in 2022 and 2023, experts say.

But those improvements are now being offset by other factors that may reduce access to medical care, experts say. They say the list includes the closure of rural hospitals and the U.S. Supreme Court decision that did away with the federally established right to abortion, which caused some doctors to feel constrained about providing care during pregnancy-related medical emergencies.

The U.S. has one of the highest maternal mortality rate among wealthy nations. Past research has found wide racial disparities in such deaths, with Black women dying at a far higher rate than white women. □

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Sex assault reports in the U.S. military fell last year, fueled by a big drop in the Army

By LOLITA C. BALDOR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of sexual assaults reported across the U.S. military dipped by nearly 4% last year, fueled by a significant drop in the Army, according to a new Pentagon report. It was the second year in a row with a decrease, reversing a troubling trend that has plagued the Defense Department for more than a decade.

Senior defense officials said that while the decline is a good sign, the number of reported assaults is still too high and the military needs to do more to get victims to report the often undisclosed crime.

According to the report, there were 8,195 reported sexual assaults in 2024 involving members of the military, compared with 8,515 in 2023. In 2022, there were 8,942 reported sexual assaults, a spike that triggered widespread alarm and led to new programs and an infusion of funding to try to combat the problem.

The overall decrease was due to a 13% drop in reported sexual assaults across the Army, which is the largest military service.

All the other services saw increases. The Navy had the largest jump of 4.3%, while the Air Force had a 2.2% increase and the Marine Corps rose by less than 1%.

Of the 8,195 total, there were 512 service members who reported an assault that happened before they entered the military. The Pentagon encourages reporting so that victims can get any support they need. In addition, 641 were civilians who said they were assaulted by a member of the military.

Uncertainty about impact of job cuts on sexual assault



The Pentagon is seen in this aerial view, in Washington, March 27, 2008.

Associated Press

programs

Speaking to reporters Thursday, Nate Galbreath, director of the Pentagon's sexual assault prevention and response office, said it's still not clear how the Trump administration's personnel and budget cuts will affect these programs. He said officials are asking for details on the number of assault prevention staff who have been laid off or who took any of the early retirement offers.

Andra Tharp, director of the command climate office, added that "when the hiring freeze went into effect, there were about 300 prevention workforce positions posted on USA jobs that are essentially on hold." But, she said, some departments have been able to get exemptions.

Galbreath said the department also is now able to link sexual assaults to military readiness. He said a survey showed that service members who had experienced assault were more likely to leave the military, be demoted, miss a promotion or have some other type of negative action put in their

files than those who hadn't been victimized.

He said the survey followed troops who said in 2016 that they had experienced a sexual assault, and a group of others who did not.

As a result, he said the Defense Department is working to develop a recovery program to teach healthy coping skills and other assistance for victims. The department also has a Safe Helpline where troops can seek help.

Sexual harassment complaints rise

While reported assaults decreased, the number of sexual harassment complaints went from 2,980 in 2023 to 3,014 last year. Most were filed by female service members, and the vast majority of those accused were male. The number of cases in which misconduct was substantiated increased a bit last year over the 2023 total. The number of discharges and administrative actions against alleged perpetrators continued to increase, and court-martial charges declined — both trends going back several years.

Officials noted that nearly

three-quarters of the court-martial cases ended in convictions, a slight increase over the previous year.

Sexual assault reports in the military have gone up for much of the past decade, except for a tiny decrease in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown. Officials say they are optimistic about the recent decreases but say much more work needs to be done.

As in previous years, most sexual assault reports are filed by those between ages 18 and 24 and involve lower-ranking service members.

Impact of Pentagon changes

While it is difficult to point to any one reason for the two-year decline, the Defense Department has been making a series of changes over the past year that officials say may be contributing. The services were using more than \$1 billion to improve programs and hire up to 2,500 personnel as part of a new "prevention workforce" and place them at military installations worldwide.

So far, about 1,400 have been hired, but that process has stalled due to the Trump

administration's budget and personnel cuts across the federal government. Defense officials said they are working to spread the existing workers around to lessen the gaps until more can be hired. The latest report also reflects the first full year since new prosecution procedures have been in place, putting independent lawyers in charge of those decisions and sidelining commanders after years of pressure from Congress.

Officials said it is too soon to tell what effect those changes are having on prosecutions. The Pentagon releases a report every year on the number of sexual assaults reported by or about troops. But because sexual assault is a highly underreported crime, the department also does a confidential survey every two years to get a clearer picture of the problem. That online survey came out last year, so it was not done this year.

Last year's survey said more than 29,000 active-duty service members said they had experienced unwanted sexual contact in the previous year, compared with nearly 36,000 in the 2021 survey, according to several defense officials.

The decrease was the first in eight years.

But officials said the survey also indicates that a large number of service members never file a report.

Defense officials have long argued that an increase in reported assaults is a positive trend because so many people are reluctant to report them, both in the military and in society as a whole. Greater reporting, they say, shows there is more confidence in the reporting system and greater comfort with the support for victims. □

Overdose deaths in Kentucky dropped by nearly a third last year, Gov. Beshear says

By **BRUCE SCHREINER**
Associated Press

The number of overdose deaths in Kentucky last year dropped by 30.2% — down to 1,410 lives lost — giving state leaders a surge of confidence that prevention and treatment efforts are making progress against an addiction epidemic they say is shattering families across the state. This was the third straight yearly decrease in drug overdose deaths for the state, although prior declines were substantially smaller. Kentucky has long been plagued by high rates of addiction to opioid painkillers, and fatal overdoses surged during the COVID-19 pandemic, when treatment was hard to get and people were socially isolated.

Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear, who announced the latest overdose statistics on Thursday, called the results a "watershed moment" reflecting years of painstaking work to combat the spread and use of drugs. "This is what we have been hoping for and praying for," Beshear said. "What we're seeing here ought to give everyone who's worked so hard to get to this point ... hope that we can do even more."

State Attorney General Russell Coleman, a Republican, said Kentuckians should "rejoice in every life saved from this



Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear sits for an interview in Versailles, Ky., May 17, 2023.

Associated Press

scourge," but warned that powerful illicit drugs like fentanyl continue to pose a threat.

"As little as one pill can and is killing our sons and daughters," Coleman said in a statement.

Fentanyl and methamphetamine continued to be the most prevalent drugs contributing to overdose deaths in Kentucky.

Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, who has steered huge sums of federal funding to his home state to combat its addiction woes, said he was encouraged by

the gains in combating the drug crisis, from stemming the flow of illicit drugs to offering treatment services in communities.

"I've always worked to keep Kentucky at the forefront of our national response to the drug crisis," McConnell said in a statement. "We are finally making progress in restoring the Southern Border, but there's still a lot of work left to do in the commonwealth to help those struggling with addiction."

Kentucky's drop reflected broader gains achieved in the U.S. There were about

97,000 U.S. overdose deaths in the 12 months that ended last June 30, according to provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That was down 14% from the estimated 113,000 for the prior 12-month period. Overdose death rates nationwide began steadily climbing in the 1990s because of opioid painkillers, followed by waves of deaths led by other opioids like heroin and more recently fentanyl.

Beshear, seen as a potential candidate for the White House in 2028, said plenty of groups were deserving

of credit for Kentucky's big decline in overdose deaths. He praised law enforcement efforts to remove dangerous drugs from circulation and the work of addiction treatment centers and other recovery services. And he credited those Kentuckians battling addiction who reached out for help.

"Whether it's your first, fifth or 10th attempt, we want to stand behind you," the governor said. "We want to provide you the best help that we can."

Other factors, he said, include the distribution of Narcan, which can reverse overdoses of opioids, as well as the availability of addiction services through Medicaid and the work of syringe exchange programs.

"Regardless of what the politics say, syringe exchange programs work," Beshear said. "They help us get to know people and they help us to save lives."

Meanwhile, Coleman has rolled out a youth-focused initiative aimed at keeping young people away from deadly substances.

With all those efforts, the challenge now is to continue driving down fatal overdoses, Beshear said.

"It ought to tell us that an epidemic that arose in our time, we should be able to defeat in our time," the governor said. □



The Los Angeles skyline is seen from a Baldwin Hills overlook, Feb. 9, 2024.

Associated Press

By **SOPHIE AUSTIN**
Associated Press/Report for America
SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California's population climbed above 39.5 million

in 2024, marking the second year of growth following a string of declines in the nation's most populous state during the coronavirus pandemic.

Here's how much California's population grew in 2024 after a COVID-era dip

The population rose an estimated 1%, adding 108,000 people compared to 2023, according to a report released Thursday by the Department of Finance. The increase is due in part to the number of births outpacing deaths and a boost in the number of adults 65 and older.

The state said it also had better data to account for increases in legal immigration into the state from other countries.

About one in nine people living in the United States reside in California.

The Democratic governor

touted the population gains as a sign of the state's growing economy, which is one of the largest in the world. The size of the state's economy has now surpassed that of Japan, which puts it only behind the U.S. as a whole, China and Germany, Newsom's office announced last week.

"People from across the nation and the globe are coming to the Golden State to pursue the California Dream, where rights are protected and people are respected," Newsom said in a statement. "Regions throughout California are growing, strengthen-

ing local communities and boosting our state's future." But Republicans in the Democrat-dominated state and beyond have taken aim at California's population declines in the past and the loss of its residents to Texas, which previously made up the largest state-to-state movement in the U.S., according to U.S. Census data.

Critics have tied past population decreases in the Golden State to the relentless homelessness crisis and rising cost of living. California has some of the highest housing, gas and utility prices in the country. □

Trump threatens sanctions against buyers of Iranian oil after U.S.-Iran nuclear talks are postponed

By JON GAMBRELL

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates

(AP) — President Donald Trump on Thursday threatened sanctions on anyone who buys Iranian oil, a warning that came after planned talks over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program were postponed.

Trump wrote on social media, "All purchases of Iranian Oil, or Petrochemical products, must stop, NOW!" He said any country or person who buys those products from Iran will not be able to do business with the United States "in any way, shape, or form."

It was unclear how Trump would implement such a ban as he threatened to levy secondary sanctions on nations that import Iranian oil. But his statement risked further escalating tensions with China — Iran's leading customer — at a time when the relationship is severely strained over the U.S. president's tariffs.

Based on tanker tracking data, the U.S. Energy Information Administration concluded in a report published last October that "China took nearly 90% of Iran's crude oil and condensate exports in 2023." Trump has separately placed 145% tariffs on China as a way to raise federal revenues and rebalance global trade.

Trump's social media threat came after Oman announced planned nuclear negotiations for this com-



President Donald Trump arrives to speak during a National Day of Prayer event in the Rose Garden of the White House, Thursday, May 1, 2025, in Washington.

Associated Press

ing weekend had been postponed. Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi made the announcement in a post on the social platform X.

"For logistical reasons we are rescheduling the US Iran meeting provisionally planned for Saturday May 3rd," he wrote. "New dates will be announced when mutually agreed."

Al-Busaidi, who has mediated the talks through three rounds so far, did not elaborate.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei issued a statement describing the talks as being "postponed at the request of Oman's

foreign minister." He said Iran remain committed to reaching "a fair and lasting agreement."

Meanwhile, a person familiar with the U.S. negotiators said America "had never confirmed its participation" in a fourth round of talks in Rome. However, the person said the U.S. expected the talks to occur "in the near future." The person spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door negotiations.

Rome will see the Vatican begin its conclave next week to pick a new pope after the death of Pope Francis. Two other rounds of U.S.-Iran talks

have been held in Muscat, the capital of Oman.

The talks seek to limit Iran's nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of some of the crushing economic sanctions the U.S. has imposed on the Islamic Republic closing in on a half-century of enmity. The negotiations have been led by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and U.S. Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff. Trump has repeatedly threatened to unleash airstrikes targeting Iran's program if a deal isn't reached. Iranian officials increasingly warn that they could pursue a nuclear weapon with their stockpile of uranium enriched to near

weapons-grade levels.

The U.S. president with his threat on social media would be going after Iran's major economic resource. It produced an average of 2.9 million barrels a day in 2023 of crude oil, according to the Energy Information Administration.

Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers did limit Tehran's program. However, Trump unilaterally withdrew from it in 2018, setting in motion years of attacks and tensions. The wider Middle East also remains on edge over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, the U.S. continues an airstrike campaign, called "Operation Rough Rider," that has been targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels, who long have been backed by Iran. U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth early Thursday warned Iran over the rebels.

"Message to IRAN: We see your LETHAL support to The Houthis. We know exactly what you are doing," he wrote. "You know very well what the U.S. Military is capable of — and you were warned. You will pay the CONSEQUENCE at the time and place of our choosing." Last Saturday's round of talks, which included experts drilling down into the details of a possible deal, also took place as an explosion rocked an Iranian port, killing at least 70 people and injuring more than 1,000 others. □

A U.N. top court orders Venezuela to halt election plans in a resource-rich area in Guyana

By BERT WILKINSON

Associated Press

GEORGETOWN, Guyana (AP)

— The United Nations' top court ordered Venezuela on Thursday to refrain from holding elections for officials who supposedly would oversee a resource-rich area in neighboring Guyana that both countries claim as their own. The ruling by the International Court of Justice in the Netherlands comes at the request of Guyana, which accused Venezuela of violating

an earlier ruling by planning to hold elections on May 25 for a governor and other officials to administer the Essequibo region.

Guyanese President Irfaan Ali said he welcomed the ruling. "Once again, Guyana's position has prevailed," he said. Venezuela's press office did not immediately return a message seeking comment. The Essequibo region represents two-thirds of Guyana and is rich in gold, diamonds, timber and other natural

resources. It also is located close to massive offshore oil deposits, with current production averaging some 650,000 barrels daily.

The dispute between the South American neighbors over Essequibo began more than a century ago, when an international tribunal in 1899 drew the border between them.

In 2018, Guyana went to the International Court of Justice and asked judges to uphold the 1899 ruling.



A youth drives a motorcycle in front of a mural of a map of Venezuela with the Essequibo territory, a swath of land administered and controlled by Guyana but claimed by Venezuela, in the 23 de Enero neighborhood of Caracas, Venezuela, Dec. 11, 2023.

Associated Press

The case is still pending in court while tensions between the two countries keep rising. In late 2023, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro

threatened to annex the region by force after holding a referendum asking voters if Essequibo should be turned into a Venezuelan state. □

Rebels in Colombia are recruiting youth on social media. The U.N. wants TikTok and Facebook to do more

By **MANUEL RUEDA and ASTRID SUAREZ**
Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) —

Rebel groups in Colombia are using apps like Facebook and Tik Tok to recruit children and young adults, and social media companies must do more to moderate content, the United Nations says.

The U.N.'s top human rights official in Colombia, Scott Campbell, in an interview with The Associated Press said more investment is needed in both automated tools and human moderators to take down videos posted by gangs and rebel groups that are targeting youth from marginalized communities.

Colombian rebel groups such as the FARC-EMC are increasingly posting videos that glamorize life in their ranks and urge youth to enlist. "These companies are not putting enough resources into online content moderation in the global south," Campbell said, calling Colombia an example of how "grave" the threat can be for children and Indigenous communities. He said companies take more action in the global north, where they feel the most political pressure.

Campbell, who previously served as a human rights and technology specialist at the U.N.'s Geneva office, said he recently met with representatives from Meta, which



U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia Scott Campbell gives an interview in Bogota, Colombia, Tuesday, April 29, 2025.

Associated Press

owns Facebook, to discuss how rebel groups and gangs can be stopped from using the company's platforms to recruit young people.

He said the company pledged to work on the problem, and added that he is also seeking a meeting with TikTok representatives. In an email, a TikTok spokesperson said the company has developed community guidelines that include not allowing hateful or violent organizations on its platform. The company said if it notices that these organizations are using its platform, or if suspicious accounts are

flagged by users who contact its help center, it will review accounts and delete them. TikTok also said it has been working closely with police in Colombia and with the army to identify and shut down accounts that violate community guidelines.

In a separate email, Meta said the company has a policy of banning terrorist organizations from using its platforms and that it is collaborating with law enforcement to fight efforts to recruit children.

"We also collaborate with other companies to share information and take ac-

tions against these evolving threats across the internet," Meta said. The recruitment of children has become a major problem in rural areas of Colombia that are disputed by the military, drug gangs and rebel groups.

According to Colombia's Human Rights Ombudsman, 409 children under 18 were recruited into rebel groups in the South American nation last year, twice as many as in 2023.

The U.N. recorded 216 cases of forced recruitment of minors in Colombia last year. The problem has been particularly striking in Cauca

province in the southwest, where fighting has intensified as rebel groups try to fill a power vacuum left by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the guerrilla group that made peace with the government in 2016. Anyi Zapata, a human rights specialist with ACIN, an Indigenous association in Cauca, said rebel groups there have long targeted vulnerable children, offering them money to do small favors and gifts like cellphones. Now they are posting videos on social media that show members with motorcycles, SUVs and adventurous lifestyles. One TikTok account recently featured a video of a man on a motorcycle wearing camouflage, with the caption: "Join me and you will know friendship without hypocrisy."

The images often show logos of rebel groups.

Campbell said that even when accounts are taken down, they can be replaced by others. He said social media companies need to share their information on such accounts with Colombian prosecutors, who can file charges against people posting the content.

"It's difficult to get the balance right between freedom of expression and legitimate speech, while pulling down content that is clearly illegal and can cause harm," Campbell said. □



Campaigners take part in a rally organised by trans rights groups, trade unions, and community organisations following the Supreme Court ruling on the definition of a woman in equalities law, at Parliament Square, central London, Saturday April 19, 2025.

By **BRIAN MELLEY**
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Transgender

Associated Press

women will be banned from playing on women's soccer teams in England and Scot-

Transgender women soccer players to be banned from women's teams in England and Scotland

land following a U.K. Supreme Court ruling last month, the sport's governing body said Thursday.

The Football Association said it had decided to change its rules that had allowed transgender athletes to play on women's soccer if they had reduced testosterone levels. The Scottish Football Association made a similar decision that applies to competitive women and girls' soccer.

The U.K.'s highest court issued a ruling two weeks ago that defined a woman for anti-discrimination purposes as someone born biologically

female. The head of the Equality and Human Rights Commission said after the ruling that transgender women would be excluded from women's toilets, hospital wards and sports teams.

The issue has been polarizing in the U.K. and beyond, particularly in the United States, where President Donald Trump has signed executive orders to prohibit participation of transgender athletes in sports and to use a rigid definition of the sexes, rather than gender, for federal government purposes. The orders are being challenged in court.

The FA said that its policy before Thursday had been to make the sport accessible to as many people as possible, but that it would make alterations if there were changes in law, science or the operations of "grassroots football."

"We understand that this will be difficult for people who simply want to play the game they love in the gender by which they identify, and we are contacting the registered transgender women currently playing to explain the changes and how they can continue to stay involved in the game," the FA said in a statement. □

Did you know about...?

The history and meaning of the Aruban florin

(Oranjestad)—Aruba Today is proud to officially introduce a new segment called Did you know about...?, where we dive into some (historical) facts of Aruba, its culture and way of living. In this first edition, we look back at the Aruban florin: its history, design and symbolism.

In Aruba, we know the 5, 10, 25 and 50 cent coins, along with the 1 and 5 Florin coin. Aruban Florin bills include the 10, 25, 50, 100, and rarely, the 200 bills. In Papiamentu we call our currency Florin, but the umbrella term for money is placa. Cents are called cen (pronounced: seng), both in the singular and plural form. Most coins are circular and their size depend on their worth. However, the 50 cent coin is easily recognizable by their square shape, as is the 5 Florin coin by their golden color. Every coin has the Aruban emblem carved on it, with the other side displaying the worth of the coin. The bigger 1 and 5 florin coins, however, contain the carving of the emblem on one side, while displaying the side profile of the Dutch king, Willem-Alexander, on the other side. When his mother, Princess Beatrix, was reigning queen, it was her profile that was carved on the two coins.

Outdated Aruban coins and their names

In the past, Aruban coins had distinctive names and also varied in worth. For example, a 5-cent coin was once called Dos placa; 10-cent coins were called debchi; 25-cent coins were called diez placa and the 50-cent coin was once called Yotin (pronounced: jo-teen). We also used a distinctive coins worth 2 ½ cents, called placa too. However, this last coin is no longer in use and has become a relic of Aruban money. Back then, the 5-Florin coin used to also be square, but now it is circular.

Aruban bills: their design and symbolism

The Aruban Florin collection contains a variation of colorful bills, displaying incredibly detailed and beautiful designs that tell the story of Aruba on a single piece of paper.

Prior to 2019, the Aruban Florin bills were relatively simpler in design compared to now, but still included beautiful designs and colors, often depicting local animals. These past designs were made by the Aruban



artist Everino Fingal in 1990 up to 2019. Between 1990 and 1993, the 5 Florin coin was a bill. The Fingal designs also included a 500-Florin bill, which has now been discontinued.

In 2019, the Central Bank of Aruba commissioned a new design of the Aruba Florin bills, this time selecting artist and former art teacher, Nigel Matthew, to present his new design. Matthew kept the tradition of including local animals and the familiar colors on the bills. However, he included additional designs that represent the Aruban culture and link to the Indigenous inhabitants that were the first to set foot on the island.

Current design and symbolism 10 florin

On the 10-florin bill, you can see a Turtuga blanco (white turtle). The blue color symbolizes the blue Caribbean Sea. You can also see the ruins of the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins, a coral motif, and the symbols of Cas Floria (traditional Aruban house design) with a piece of mosaic.

25 florin

On this orange bill, you can see an Aruban medicinal plant called Shoshoro. The birds Trupiaal, Shoco, rock drawings, and the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic are also depicted. There is also

a Purun di ceramica (clay pot), in reference to the relics left behind by our indigenous ancestors.

50 florin

On this bill, we see the Cododo (blue lizard found on the ABC islands), Cangreu di tera (land crab), Willem III Tower, and again the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, as well as a beach plant called Banana di rif. The colors are pink/purple.

100 florin

This bill is green in color, representing nature. Here we see the Yuwana (Iguana), Aloe, Toteki (lizard), the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, and a dance group performing the Baile di cinta (folkloric dance with silk ribbons).

200 florin

There is another bill with a value of 200 dollars. The brown color symbolizes the earth of Aruba. Here we see the Dornasol and the Warawara—both local birds, along with the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, the Tuna cactus plant, and the Caha di orgel (folkloric instrument, used for many traditional songs).

Extra fact:

the word “florin” supposedly is named after the Italian city of Florence or it's a reference to the Italian word “florino”, both explanations related to historical Italian currencies. □

Source: Placa, placa, placa by the National Library of Aruba





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Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Divi Village Golf & Beach Resort



The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Goodwill Ambassador of Aruba. The honorees were respectively honored with a certificate for their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honorary certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests

who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three levels of honor are as follows:

- Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
- Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
- Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively

visiting Aruba)

The honorees were:

Goodwill Ambassadors
Mr. Patrick and Mrs. Kimberly Gaddes from Prior Lake, Minnesota, USA.
Mr. Robert and Mrs. Karen Gaddes from Plymouth, Minnesota, USA.
Ms. Keyttin Silva, representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of Divi Village Beach Resort bestowed the certificate upon the honorees, presented them with gifts, and thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination, as their home away from home.

The top reasons for returning to Aruba provided by the honorees were:

- Aruba is a beautiful island
- Aruba's family friendly
- "Feel safe and love the locals"
- Aruba's weather
- Aruba's beaches and pools
- Aruba's accommodations
- Aruba's food and restaurants

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honorees for their continued visits to the "One Happy Island".

Another Treasure of Aruba's Beaches: Sea Glass!

NOORD - It is hard to imagine this happening today, but years ago people dumped all kinds of refuse straight into the ocean, including old cars, and their household garbage, which of course included lots of glass. Over the next 30 years the pounding waves cleaned the beach, by breaking down everything but glass and pottery. The pounding waves washed the trash up and down, back and forth. Tons of polished, broken glass pieces were created by the pounding surf. These smoothened, colored glass particles then settled along the sea shore in millions, and that is why you can find these beautiful and colorful pieces on the north shore beaches of Aruba.

Especially on the strip on white sand between the famous Natural Bridge" and the huge red anchor close to "Grapefield" beach you will be able to find your own pieces of sea glass. The sea glass that was created is the product of a very long and interesting process. It can take anywhere

from 10 to 30 years to make sea glass. The name for any piece of glass that finds its way to the ocean and tumbles around in the water long enough is "Sea glass."

The colorful pieces of glass are being used for decoration, handcrafts and jewelry! Once glass makes its way into the ocean, the glass is broken up into shards and is tumbled around in the water, where sand and other rocks act like sandpaper to smooth out its rough edges. Sometimes as the sea glass is passed through fire, it becomes fire glass, the rarest of sea glass with certain inclusions, just like precious gems.

For years, the water beat against the different kinds of trash being dumped. Glass, household appliances and even motor parts were discarded on the beach. The waves and weather conditions wore down the overwhelming amount of garbage in the water, creating millions

of beautiful smooth rocks.

It's hard to believe the short-sighted mistakes we were making that could have potentially ruined these beautiful beaches. But thanks to natural processes, the ocean transformed the trash into the sea glass. Each colored gem on the beach has its own story.

The ruby red glass stones are typically from old car tail-lights.

Then, the sapphire rocks are the remnants of broken apothecary bottles. The most common and the easiest to find are the brown (Amstel & Polar beer), green (Heineken & Balashi beer) and clear glass which are the soft much loved "soft drink" bottles.

If you like to see the sea glass for yourself, and be in awe of the power of nature, rent a car or jeep and go explore our deserted beaches on the north side of the island. Make it a fun family day!



Even if we didn't mean to pollute the Beaches how we did, it is inspiring to see just how the earth can correct our mistakes.

Funny, how trash can change into treasures!

Everybody knows that you are not allowed to take local shells home, but the people working at the airport have no problem you taking sea glass home. A few of those pieces make great souvenirs. You can place them in a wine glass or large bottle for decoration and every time you look at it a smile will light up your face thinking back of your unforgettable Aruba vacation!

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Surf's Up: Favorite places to catch waves in Aruba



ORANJESTAD – Whether you are a salt-seasoned surfer looking for a thrill, or just looking to wet your toes in a little ocean adventure, Aruba has amazing places to learn and practice surfing! Although more known for the calmer waters of Palm Beach, Eagle Beach and Mangel Halto, Aruba also has some special places to thrill your senses.

Because of strong winds and breezes, Aruba is perfect for wind and kite surfing. You will surely notice kites in the air as you drive

around the wilder, rougher areas on Aruba's east side.

There are plenty of surf shop rentals to help you with your gear, and there are also a lot of tutors if you're looking to try for the first time and need a little help. These can be found around the island, and will surely come in hand if you're wanting to try a new experience!

With that said, here are Aruba's favorite surf spots!

Andicuri

Andicuri is recognized as

the best place for body boarding. Because of the rough waves, this beach is better suited for those with more experience in surfing. However, the beach with two bluffs – one on each side – is worth a visit, if only to watch the exciting show presented by the surfers.

To go to Andicuri, you will need a 4x4 vehicle and drive from the ex-Natural Bridge Center. Alternatively, you can make it an adventure by going on a hike! The scenery is unique and beautiful on its own.

Reaching Andicuri Beach can be an adventure in itself, as it can be difficult to find and is only accessible by 4x4 vehicle or walking from the ex-Natural Bridge center, but the impressive scenery makes it all worthwhile!



Arashi

Arashi, a beach located close to the California Lighthouse, is a good spot for learning and having fun – if you're lucky! The waves at Arashi are usually calm, but with just the right weather, a swell forms attracting all the local surfers to the area.

Boca Grandi

Boca Grandi is at the most southern spot in Aruba, and is a popular spot with experienced surfers. Close to the famous Red Anchor and our beloved Sunrise City – San Nicolas, a trip to Boca Grandi can easily turn into an all-day trip to this area of the island. With a beautiful beach (although it is not allowed to swim here, because of strong currents), you can enjoy a relaxing time combing the beach for driftwood, coral, and

little crabs and snails.

Hadicurari

Known locally as Fisherman's Hut, here is where you will find most of the action for surfers in Aruba. With a variety of surf shops and schools in this area, you will find it easy to get in on the action. Hadicurari is also the site of the Aruba Hi Winds World Challenge, which takes place usually in June/July, and it is the largest windsurfing competition in the Caribbean!

Malmok

If you're a beginner, this is your spot. There are also various shops to rent gear and receive lessons, facilitating learning and just trying out a new experience. The beach is also popular for paddleboarding and other watersport activities. □



For a small island, Aruba sure has a lot of unique treasures. Among these, we have some subspecies of animals that are unique to our island. These have evolved to perfectly adapt to our desert climate and make Aruba their home. At the same time, they are part of what makes Aruba truly one of a kind.

Cascabel (rattlesnake, *Crotalus durissus unicolor*)

According to the Arikok National Park, Aruba knows two kinds of snakes, the Santanero and the Cascabel. The cascabel belongs to the rattlesnake family. The cascabel is the only venomous snake from Aruba. It has a length of 65cm to 100cm, and is about 4 to 5cm wide. Its color varies from light brown to grey-brown, and its underbelly is white. On its back there are marks that are a little darker, in the shape of diamonds.

Its reproduction is oviparous, meaning the offspring can hatch from their eggs just before, during or immediately after laying.

The cascabel lives mainly in the Arikok National Park. It likes to live in dark places, and is thus found hidden among the limestone rocks and under stones. As a defense mechanism, the cascabel uses its rattle as a warning, and it is not an aggressive animal.

The cascabel feeds on lizards, small mammals such as rats and mice. It paralyzes or kills its prey with its venom, which is injected through a bite. The enemies of the casca-

bel are donkeys, goats, humans and cars. Humans are the biggest enemy of the cascabel, as they kill them and destroy their habitat for urbanization.

Shoco (burrowing owl, *Athene cucularia arubensis*)

The shoco is a small bird which is seldom seen. They are active during the day but are more active later in the day and at night for hunting. These owls have very good night vision and very good hearing. The shoco is the national symbol of Aruba.

The shoco has about 20cm of length, and the females are slightly heavier than the males. They are light brown in color, with many white spots. The belly of the Shoco is either white or light brown, and the shoco has striking yellow eyes. Its beak is yellow/green. Young owls do not have white spots and are lighter in color. The nest of the shoco is a burrow in the ground. If the shoco cannot find a burrow, it will dig one in soft soil. The shoco lays one or two eggs every other day until all the eggs are laid – a shoco can lay up to four eggs. The first owlets hatch after three to four weeks. The shoco owl takes care of the owlets for three months until they leave the nest. Only a few owlets survive.

The owls dig burrows in the ground with low grass vegetation. An owl can live up to nine years.

Its defense mechanism is simply to fly away or retreat to its burrows. They eat mostly insects, mice and

Unique fauna of Aruba

lizards, and the main threats to their survival are boas – an invasive species introduced by humans as pets – and humans through destruction of their habitat.

Prikichi (parakeet, *Aratinga pertinax*)

The Prikichi is the national bird of Aruba. On Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, parakeets can be found, but each of the three islands has a different breed. The Yellow-shouldered Amazon parakeet that we have on Aruba is also found along the coast of Venezuela. Unfortunately, there is interbreeding between the breeds due to cage birds from, for example, Curaçao being released on Aruba. The parakeet population on Aruba is in danger due to extensive deforestation occurring on the island because of the growing population.

The prikichi weighs between 90 to 100 grams. It has a greenish-brown head with some yellow around the eye. The back and wings of the parakeet are dark green, and the underside of the body is a lighter shade of green. There is also a bit of blue in the wings. The parakeet's beak is gray/black.

Parakeets often use termite nests as breeding sites. Parakeets are found in all natural environments (mondi) of the island. It defends itself by flying away and loud cries. Parakeets eat seeds from the pods of the Kwihi tree, Divi Divi, and columnar cactus. They also consume natural fruits. Its main predators are boa constrictors, humans.

Conew (cottontail rabbit, *Sylvilagus floridanus nigronuchalis*)

The Eastern Cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) was probably brought over to the island by Indian settlers thousands of years ago as a source of food. This rabbit, locally known as Conew, has spread all over the island and has become part of our ecosystem. The very adaptable Conew can live in

a wide variety of habitats, including Aruba's xeric scrublands, where it typically grazes on weeds and grasses.

The Aruban Conew has a brownish grey color and a distinctive white belly. This white fur extends to the bottom of the tail which becomes visible as the rabbit runs. These rabbits can grow up to approximately 40 centimeters in length over their short lifespan of 3 years. Cottontail rabbits reach reproductive maturity when they are just 2 to 3 months old. A female rabbit, called a doe, finds a suitable nest spot under a shrub or rocks and lines it with fur. She can have an average of 3 to 4 litters per year averaging 5 young each. The doe only visits her young once or twice a day to nurse her babies for a period of 2 to 3 weeks. The young reach independence at 4 to 5 weeks.

The Aruban Conew is an endangered species and protected by Aruban law. The Conew is thought to have drastically declined due to an increase in human activities, habitat fragmentation and predation by the invasive Boa constrictor as well as feral cats and dogs. However, recently there seem to be more rabbit sightings in rural and wilderness areas and also in the National Park. This could be linked to a recent decline of the invasive Boa population after the long period of drought. As the Conew can reproduce very quickly, a short break in predation pressure can lead to a fast increase of rabbits. Sadly, the Boas are back on the rise again with the truly wet rainy seasons we have recently experienced. This could cause a new decline in the Conew population that was just starting to recover.

These are but a few of Aruba's beautiful inhabitant, which we must all contribute to protect. For more information, visit <https://www.arubanationalpark.org/main/flora-fauna/> ☐



Exploring the Mainstreet of San Nicolas



SAN NICOLAS— At Just 11 miles southeast from Oranjestad you will enter the city San Nicolas, also known as Sunrise City or Chocolate City. A city that is rich in authentic culture and island charm. San Nicolas is Aruba's second largest city and was once a bustling company town dominated by the oil industry since the early 1930's.

Over the course of four decades, its demographics had changed immensely due to a stream of Afro-Caribbean and South American workers who came to fill the jobs in the oil refinery between the 1920's until the 1960's. To this day traces of the multicultural influences in culinary offerings and customs, housing and population are clearly visible in San Nicolas - more than anywhere else on the island.



Flow of history

if you are looking for history San Nicolas has it. Here you will find three amazing museums, The Museum of Industry, the Community Museum and the Carnival Euphoria, all within walking distance from one another.

The Museum of Industry is situated in the Water Tower in San Nicolas and narrates Aruba's industrial history which began in the 19th century. Here you will learn about gold, aloe, phosphate, oil and the tourism industries which made San Nicolas once a bustling business center. Experience the touching stories of those who were part of this history. Nicolaas Store built in 1940 and renovated in 2014 is the home of the Community Museum. The collection is remarkable and spans millennia. Ancient fossils stand next to tableaus of an authentically recreated colonial kitchen and bedroom and 19th-century barbershop, just to name a few of the items of old-time Aruba that has been preserved. A collection of artifacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical, or scientific importance can be found here for the purpose of education or enjoyment.

Carnival Euphoria is showcasing Aruba's Carnival. See how are Carnival has developed over the past 65 years.

The new San Nicolas

In the shadow of the refinery, an art capital is quietly beginning to grow. This is the new San Nicolas, a place that is starting to become a magnet for all that is young, cool and hip in Aruba. Indeed, San Nicolas has all of the ingredients of an emerging cultural hub — varied history, interesting architecture, and, perhaps most importantly, an urban layout that makes it walkable. As



you walk around, the streets are silent but the walls are loud, filled with bright, colorful murals painted by a collection of artists from around the world. Thanks to the efforts of various art organizations in Aruba, such as Art Rules Aruba and Aruba Art Fair, San Nicolas has had quite the aesthetic makeover with regards to vibrant street art. Each year more and more stunning murals are replacing broken down buildings with colorful art pieces that keep brightening up SunriseCity.

Must See, Do, Buy & Eat

A little bit of everything can be found in the main street. Stores selling shoes, clothing, jewelry you name it. Don't miss out on trying the exquisite food offered by the cafes and restaurants or just enjoy a peaceful walk admiring the murals, mosaic benches and all the history San Nicolas has to offer. □

Feeling parched? Grab refreshment by the side of the road!



(Oranjestad)—Touring the island in the blistering heat can leave one feeling rather thirsty and looking to cool off. Luckily there are a few stands along the roads of Aruba that can offer you just what you need: a nice, refreshing beverage!

These "coconut stands" can be found at several locations on the island, where you can cool off with delicious smoothies, drinks, snacks, and of course, fresh coconuts! Perfect during family outings around the island, these stands can be found in the following locations:

- Near the red Anchor in San Nicolas
- On the Linear Park in Oranjestad (in front of airport runway)
- At the California Light House hill
- Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruin
- Bushiribana Beach (Near the Ling & Song Supermarket)



CROSSWORD

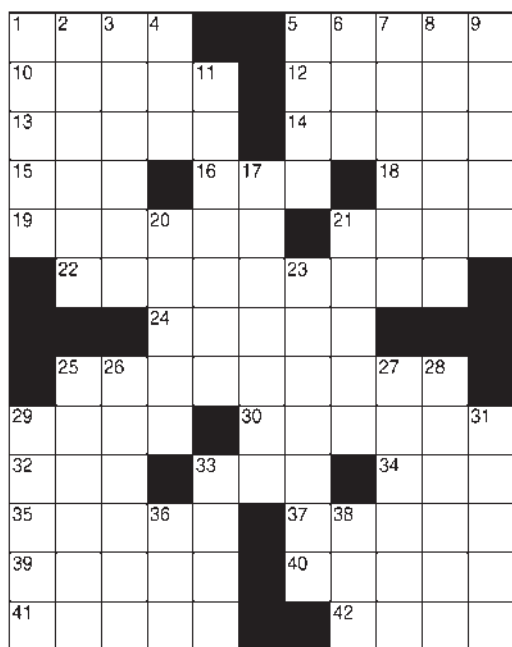
By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 39 Loosen, as laces
1 Bit of change
5 Derision
10 Protons' places
12 Camp craft
13 Betray
14 Game setting
15 Quarter-back Manning
16 Resistance unit
18 Plopped down
19 Muralist Diego
21 Actor O'Shea
22 Vouched for
24 Kind of kitchen
25 Put right
29 Phone message
30 Charge for cash
32 Much of N. Amer.
33 French article
34 Phoned copy
35 Support staff
37 Bring to bear

DOWN

- 1 Bold one
2 Stressed type
3 Whodunit element
4 Moody music
5 Con man's con
6 Lot sight
7 Infant outfit
8 Jimmy's successor
9 "Swell!"
11 Express disdain for
17 From Port-au-Prince
20 Put up
21 Half note
23 Age for a quince-añera
25 Take offense at
26 Track bet
27 Decadent
28 More precious
29 Ballet costumes
31 Spare
33 Calls on
36 Popular song
38 Twice VII



5-6

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

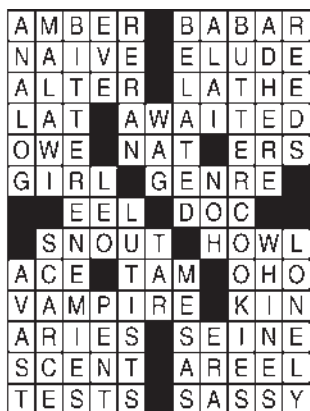
One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-6

CRYPTOQUOTE

MWSHS XHS BSL WKCHR PE
NPBS IKHS XDHSSXQNS MWXE
MWS WKCH ASAPGXMSA MK
MWS GSHSIKEJ FEKLE XR
XBMSHEKKE MSX. — WSEHJ
OXISR

Cryptoquote: GETTING TO A PLACE OF COMFORT CAN BE UNCOMFORTABLE. — MARCIUS SAMUELSSON



Cruise ship Schedule: May 1 - 11 2025

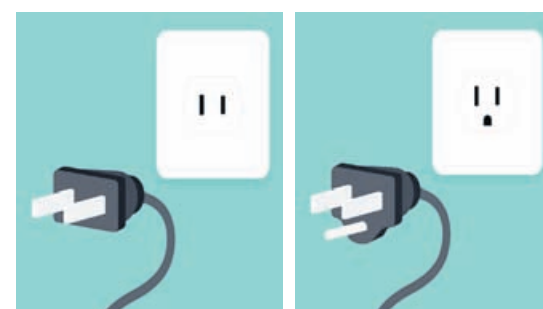
			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
THU	01	CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE	09.00	23.00	C	1
SUN	04	FREEWINDS - Dept.	****	22.30	G	-
TUE	06	CARNIVAL MAGIC	08.00	22.00	C	1
WED	07	FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1
SUN	11	FREEWINDS - Dept.	****	22.30	E	-

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.



Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

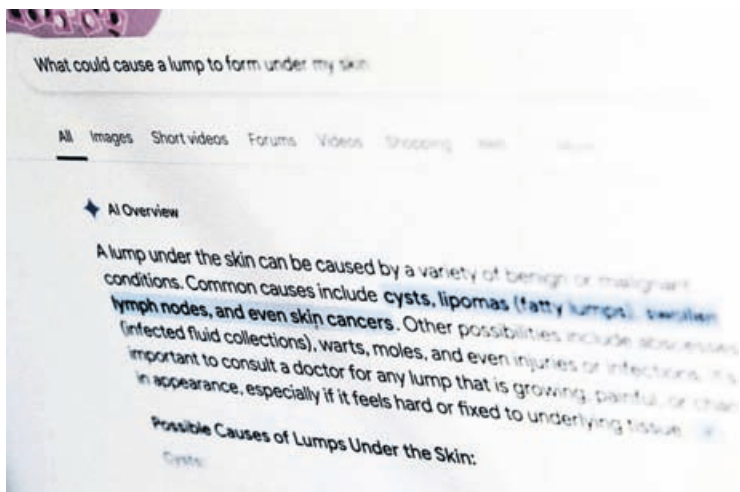


Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.



What's that rash? Put some thought into asking Google for medical help



A health-related query on Google is displayed on a computer screen in New York on Thursday, April 24, 2025.

Associated Press

By **TOM MURPHY**
AP Health Writer

Dr. Google is often on call for worried patients, but it may not give the best advice. Doctors say internet searches for medical information should be done cautiously, especially with artificial intelligence playing a growing role.

Information from the right websites can teach patients about symptoms and prepare them for a doctor's visit. But a poorly done search might inflame anxiety well before someone reaches the waiting room. It's important to know the source of the information you find and to avoid trying to diagnose your health issue.

Here are questions to keep in mind if you seek medical help online.

What's your source?

When you do a search, don't automatically click the first link. It may not contain the best answers.

Some companies pay to have their websites listed at the top of a results page. Those links may be listed as sponsored.

Scroll for results that come from a source you can trust for medical information. That can include big health systems like the Mayo Clinic or sites run by government agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"We've gotten so used to clicking on that first link," says John Grohol, a psychologist who specializes in online behavior. "For your health information, especially when it is personal, you want to think about it."

Should I use AI?

That depends on what it tells you.

More people are using artificial intelligence to get quick answers pulled from a variety of internet sources. Some searches also will generate an AI summary at the top of

the results page.

But an AI answer may not say where it got the information. That makes it hard to judge credibility.

AI also can be prone to "hallucinations," an industry term for issues that cause the technology to make stuff up. Be especially wary of this if no source is cited.

What should I ask?

How you phrase a question plays a big role in the results you see. Doctors say patients should search for information based on symptoms, not an expected diagnosis.

"You've got to ask at the very beginning the right questions," said Dr. Eric Boose of the Cleveland Clinic. That means asking, "What could cause a lump to form under my skin?" instead of "Is the lump under my skin cancer?"

Focusing on a diagnosis means you may miss other explanations, especially if you just click the first few links listed in the results.

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Avianca	588 0059
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AID FOUNDATIONS

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Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous
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Editor
Caribbean Speed Printers N.V.
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Caribbean Mercantile Bank N.V.
Acc. #23951903
RBC Royal Bank Acc. #1330772

Editors

Pilar Flores
Richard Brooks
Angenette Figuereo

Sales

Mark Gomes
Sulaika Croes

Classifieds

classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection

accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website

Juan Luis Pinto

Weststraat 22
T: 582-7800
E: news@arubatoday.com
W: www.arubatoday.com
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Violence Against Women

LeBron: 'I don't have the answer' to questions about his future after Lakers' exit from NBA playoffs

By **GREG BEACHAM**
AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — LeBron James wasn't ready to make any decisions about his future in the painful moments immediately after his 22nd NBA season ended with the Los Angeles Lakers' first-round playoff exit.

"I don't have the answer to that," James said Wednesday night when asked how long he will continue to play. "Something I'll sit down with my wife and my support group and kind of just talk through it, and see what happens. Just have conversations with myself on how long I want to continue to play. I don't know the answer to that right now, to be honest." The 40-year-old James has given no public indication he is thinking about retirement this summer, but Lakers fans will be holding their breath until the top scorer in NBA history makes his plans official.

James provided no hints after recording 22 points, seven rebounds and six assists in the Lakers' 103-96 loss to Minnesota.

"It's up to me if I'm going to continue to play, or how long I'm going to continue to play," James said. "It's ultimately up to me, so it has nothing to do with anybody else." Most observers think the four-time champion is planning to return for a 23rd season, which would break



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James looks up toward the scoreboard in the closing seconds in Game 5 of an NBA basketball first-round playoff series against the Minnesota Timberwolves, Wednesday, April 30, 2025, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

the NBA longevity record he currently shares with Vince Carter. He is also just 49 regular-season games behind Robert Parish, who holds the NBA record with 1,611 games played. James already holds the league record for career playoff games with 292. But his seventh season with the Lakers is over after the Timberwolves' 4-1 series victory. Los Angeles didn't build a winning dynamic quickly enough to the midseason arrival of Luka Doncic in a seismic trade for Anthony Davis. James' Lakers have advanced in the postsea-

son just once in the five years since their championship in the Florida bubble — but if James returns, he's coming back to a completely reconfigured team built around his new partnership with Doncic. James and Doncic played only 21 games together after the deal, and it wasn't enough to maximize their potential teamwork. Another full year together could raise their partnership to formidable levels, and James still seems intrigued by the prospect of playing a full year or more alongside the Slovenian superstar he has

described as his favorite active player.

"Anytime you make a big acquisition in the middle of the season, it's always going to be challenging, not only for me, but for (Austin Reaves) and the rest of the group," James said. "There were times where we obviously didn't look so well, but I think we kind of figured it out later in the season, the more games we had. I still don't think we had enough time to mesh, but for the time that we had, I thought we ended the regular season very well to be top three in the West."

Doncic isn't the only teammate who could compel James to return: His 20-year-old son, Bronny, is coming off a surprisingly solid rookie season with the Lakers in which they became the first father and son to play together in NBA history.

Bronny James is hoping to carve out a bigger role alongside his father next season after getting sporadic playing time this year. LeBron said the chance to work alongside Bronny this season was the "No. 1" accomplishment of his career.

There are no apparent contractual or financial issues in James' way: He has a player option for next season that will pay him more than \$56.2 million. That's serious money to leave on the table, even for a business mogul with a net worth estimated at more than \$1 billion.

An eighth consecutive season with the Lakers would be the longest stretch of his career with one team, surpassing his first seven seasons with Cleveland — although he returned for four more years and a championship with the Cavaliers.

James' level of play remained high in his 22nd season, confounding all previous notions of basketball longevity. He averaged 24.4 points per game — his lowest since his rookie season, but just barely — along with 8.2 assists and 7.8 rebounds. □



Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher Paul Skenes delivers during the first inning of a baseball game against the Chicago Cubs in Pittsburgh, Thursday, May 1, 2025.

Associated Press

By **WILL GRAVES**
AP Sports Writer

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Dansby Swanson, Kyle Tucker and Seiya Suzuki all took Pirates

ace Paul Skenes deep in the fifth inning as the Cubs pulled away for an 8-3 victory on Thursday.

Suzuki later added a two-run

Cubs take Paul Skenes deep 3 times, Suzuki homers twice in all as Chicago pulls away for 8-3 win

shot off reliever Kyle Nicolas as Chicago took two of three from the last-place Pirates. Skenes (3-3), fresh off a masterful performance in a win over the Los Angeles Dodgers last Friday, labored through his shortest start of the season.

The 22-year-old reigning National League Rookie of the Year lasted just five innings. His four walks matched his total on the season coming in and the aggressive Cubs pounced in the fifth to turn a two-run deficit into a 3-2 lead.

Swanson led off the fifth with

his sixth homer. Tucker added his eighth two batters later and Suzuki put Chicago in front to stay with a shot to the left-field bleachers. Ian Happ, a Pittsburgh native, had three hits. Swanson, Suzuki and Michael Busch had two hits apiece for the Cubs. Colin Rea (2-0) allowed two runs in a season-high six innings for Chicago.

Bryan Reynolds hit his ninth home run for Pittsburgh. The Pirates have dropped four of five.

Fallen fan aftermath

A crowd of 13,633 turned out for the matinee, includ-

ing some in the same front-row seats in right field above the 21-foot high Clemente Wall where a fan fell from on Wednesday night.

The unidentified male was in critical condition at Allegheny General Hospital on Thursday after what Pittsburgh Police described as an accident.

The public address announcer read a statement from Pirates owner Bob Nutting before the first pitch in which Nutting called the incident "one of the most difficult moments many of us have ever experienced." □



United States' Coco Gauff returns the ball against Iga Swiatek of Poland during the Madrid Open tennis tournament in Madrid, Spain, Thursday, May 1, 2025.

Associated Press

Coco Gauff routs Iga Swiatek to reach Madrid final against No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka

By **TALES AZZONI**
AP Sports Writer

MADRID (AP) — Coco Gauff overpowered defending champion Iga Swiatek 6-1, 6-1 to reach the Madrid Open singles final for the first time Thursday.

Gauff broke Swiatek's serve three times in the first set and twice in the second to cruise to a 64-minute semifinal victory over the second-ranked Swiatek at the clay-court tournament.

Gauff will face top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka, who defeated Elina Svitolina 6-3, 7-5 to reach the Madrid final for the fourth time in her career.

It was Gauff's first win over Swiatek on clay. "The mentality that I had in the whole match was aggressive," the fourth-ranked Gauff said. "Maybe it wasn't her best level today, but I think I forced her into some awkward positions."

Swiatek had recovered from losing the first set 0-6 to Madison Keys on Wednesday.

"I couldn't really get my level up," the four-time French Open champion said. "Coco played good, but I think it's on me that I didn't really move well, I wasn't ready to play back the shots with heaviness, and with that kind of game. It was pretty bad."

The last time Swiatek won only two or fewer games in a match — on any surface — was a 6-0, 6-2 loss to Jelena Ostapenko in Birmingham in 2019.

"For me," Gauff added, "it was just making sure my level stayed the same. In the second, I raised it."

Sabalenka reaches 3rd straight final

Sabalenka returned to the final after ending Svitolina's unbeaten run on clay this year — she was 9-0 on the surface in 2025, without losing a set.

Sabalenka won the title in Madrid in 2021 and 2023, and was runner-up to Swiatek last year.

Gauff is 5-4 against Sabalenka and won their only prior meeting on clay, in Rome in 2021. The American also won their most recent meeting, at the 2024 WTA Finals in Riyadh.

By beating Svitolina, Sabalenka became the first player to obtain 30 main-draw wins at WTA events in 2025.

Men's quarterfinals

In the men's quarterfinals, Casper Ruud advanced by defeating Daniil Medvedev 6-3, 7-5 to become the first player born in 1990 or later to reach 30 tour-level semifinals on clay.

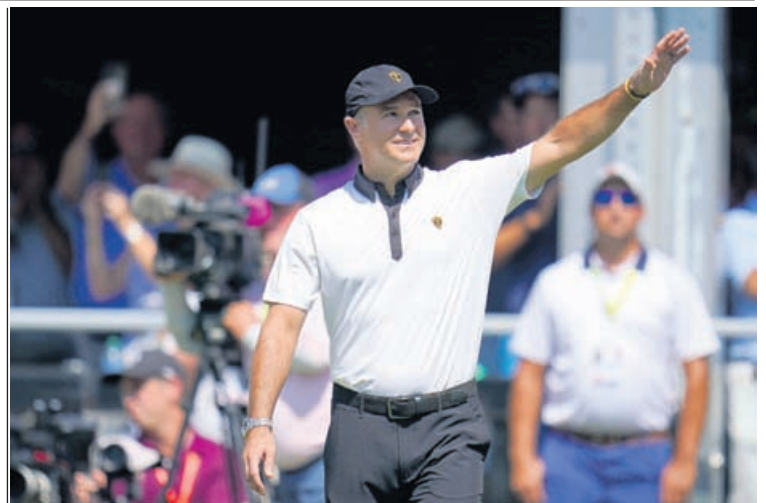
The 15th-ranked Norwegian had been 0-3 against Medvedev in his career.

"I looked at our stats last night and saw he beat me on grass, outdoor hard and indoor hard. The last surface was clay so I thought, 'please don't make it 4-0,'" Ruud said. "I tried to use the surface to my advantage. I thought the level was pretty good from both players, I was impressed with Daniil's ability to produce power here on clay."

Ruud will next face Francisco Cerundolo, who rallied to defeat teenager Jakub Mensik 3-6, 7-6 (5), 6-2.

Cerundolo had beaten top-seeded Alexander Zverev in the previous round.

In another quarterfinal, fifth-ranked Jack Draper defeated Matteo Arnaldi 6-0, 6-4. Arnaldi had beaten Novak Djokovic in the second round. Draper will enter the top 5 in the rankings for the first time thanks to his run in Madrid. He will face 10th-seeded Lorenzo Musetti, who beat Gabriel Diallo 6-4, 6-3. □



International team captain Trevor Immelman waves toward the gallery before a foursomes match at the Presidents Cup golf tournament at the Quail Hollow Club, Sept. 22, 2022, in Charlotte, N.C.

Associated Press

World ranking chair Trevor Immelman says LIV has not reapplied and 'the ball is in their court'

By **DOUG FERGUSON**
AP Golf Writer

LIV Golf getting world ranking points would start with the Saudi-funded league applying to the Official World Golf Ranking, and chairman Trevor Immelman said Thursday that first step has not happened.

Immelman, who took over as OWGR chair three weeks ago, said he has spoken with LIV CEO Scott O'Neil on the phone and met with him for a casual conversation during the Masters.

Sportico reported earlier this week that LIV Golf and the OWGR were in "serious discussions," which Immelman found to be "an interesting choice of words."

"They have not put any application in. Whether that happens or not, I guess time will tell," Immelman said in a telephone interview.

"I have enjoyed getting to know Scott O'Neil over the last few months," he said. "We've spoken on the phone a couple of times. We met in person at the Masters, just really introduction stuff. We're in the same position we have been without any application from their side. 'The ball is in their court.'"

The OWGR denied LIV's original application in October 2023, saying it could not fairly measure the league with some two dozen other tours around the world because of what amounted to a closed shop and the possibility of competition

being compromised by having team scores count simultaneously with individual results.

LIV withdrew its application in May 2024.

LIV now has 54 players — 13 four-man teams and two wild cards — a roster that stays the same same (except alternates for injury) all season.

It started a "promotions" event that offered three spots at the end of 2023, but that was reduced to one spot last year. The leader of the Asian Tour's International Series also gets a spot in LIV provided he's not already a member.

O'Neil replaced Greg Norman as the CEO of LIV Golf this year.

The four majors use the world ranking to help determine its fields, and the heads of those organizations voted to deny LIV's application.

The U.S. Open and British Open this year created a category to provide a path for at least one LIV Golf player this year. Joaquin Niemann earned that spot in the U.S. Open. The Masters has said it can get the field it needs through use of its special invitations.

"Our process is not to go chasing tours," Immelman said. "We have an open door policy. Whoever wants to apply is more than welcome. There isn't any pressure from our side. We allow these tours to figure out what their best strategy is." □

Thank You Masha Danki

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Danki, Aruba.

